

article on the birds of the Philippines, obtained during the same expedition by Dr. Henderson,—which we look forward to with much interest; as, though some fine collections have been made in those islands, and many new species described, we are destitute of any general account of their ornithology.

A new part of the quarto 'Journal' of the same Society (vol. iv. part i.) commences with illustrations of three very fine birds which have recently been described by Mr. Cassin: pl. 1, *Sele-nidera spectabilis*, a new Toucan, from Veragua; pl. 2, *Numida plumifera*, and pl. 3, *Phasidus niger*, both from Western Africa. The last bird is peculiarly interesting, as being a new form of the *Phasianidæ*, a group feebly represented in the Ethiopian Region by the genera *Numida* and *Agelastes*.

XXII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters from Mr. Gould and Mr. J. H. Gurney:—

To the Editor of the Ibis.

SIR,—As you will probably be desirous of recording in 'The Ibis' the capture of any of our rarer British birds, I send a few lines to inform you that a splendid female Goshawk (*Astur palumbarius*) was shot by one of the keepers of Sir S. Morton Peto, Bart., at Somerleyton, near Lowestoft in Suffolk, on the 24th of January in the present year. As I was shooting at Somerleyton at the time, the bird was placed in my hands soon after it was killed, and there can be no doubt, therefore, of its being a truly British specimen. The bird in question was a fine female, and weighed as nearly as possible 2 lbs. 14 oz. Had it lived another month or two at the utmost, it would have assumed its adult livery, a change having already commenced on the throat and upper part of the neck, the feathers on those parts being barred, while those on the breast had the usual elongated markings of immaturity. The bird had been noticed for nearly a month prior to its being shot, and on one occasion visited the neighbourhood of the keeper's house, causing the utmost alarm and consternation among his tame fowls. Its object in this in-

stance was evidently not attained, as the keeper's wife saw it sitting quietly on the paling of the garden, and looking as sheepish as Falcons usually do when they miss their quarry.

The colouring of the soft parts was as follows:—Irides bright yellow; bill bluish, with a blackish-brown tip; cere and gape obscure yellow; legs and toes pale yellow.

I have been particular in describing the colouring of the soft parts, because these points, which are often of great interest, are too frequently neglected; and I would suggest to those who have the opportunity of observing our birds in a state of nature, the desirability of their carefully attending to and recording the colouring of the soft parts, from life, or immediately after death, of some of our rarer, and indeed of even our commoner birds, such as the Rails, Crakes, Sand-pipers, Ducks, and Sea-birds, and especially of their dress and colouring during the first few days of their existence, the downy or infantine dress being often most interesting, and comparatively unknown.

I am, Sir,

Yours very obediently,

JOHN GOULD.

20 Broad-street, Golden-square, W.

Feb. 3, 1859.

To the Editor of the Ibis.

SIR,—IN Mr. E. C. Taylor's interesting paper in the first Number of 'The Ibis,' entitled "Ornithological Reminiscences of Egypt," that gentleman remarks, that in *Milvus ægyptius* "the beak is pale straw-colour and the irides are brown, characteristics which at once distinguish it from *Milvus ater* of Europe, which has the beak black and the irides yellow." I have now in my possession living specimens of both these species. I am able to state, that in both of them the irides are brown, the only difference between them in this respect being that the irides are a darker brown in *Milvus ater* than they are in *Milvus ægyptius*.

J. H. GURNEY.

Catton Hall, Norwich,

Feb. 18, 1859.

The subjoined communication relates to the early appearance of the Night Jar :—

Whilst walking home from dinner on the evenings of the 4th and 5th of this month, I was extremely surprised to hear the note of the Night Jar (*Caprimulgus europæus*). On the former evening I fancied I must have been mistaken, as this bird is generally one of the latest migratory arrivals. The second evening, however, whilst standing still for a few minutes, the bird crossed the road, and uttered its familiar cry just in front of me. The Sallows are in many places in full bloom, and the spring Moths, such as *Taniocampa gothica*, *cruda* and *stabilis*, and *Phigalia pilosaria*, are out, whilst all the hybernating Lepidoptera are on the wing; so the *Caprimulgi* are in no danger of paying the price of starvation for their premature arrival.

REV. H. HARPUR CREWE.

Drinkstone, Woolpit, Suffolk, March 9, 1859.

Mr. Fraser's last letters are dated from Nanegal, on the western slope of Pichincha, February 12th. The following extracts relate to an expedition made from Riobamba to Chimborazo, for the purpose of obtaining specimens of the beautiful Humming-bird (*Oreotrochilus chimborazo*), which is only found on that mountain :—

“ Riobamba is situated in the centre of a large sandy plain, at an elevation of 9600 feet above the sea-level. Having crossed this at 2 P.M., we passed through a small pueblo called Lican. Our road now lay round and between barren hills, with every sheltered spot in a state of cultivation, until at 3.30 P.M. we came to Calpi—a considerable pueblo, but without water. As the rain was beginning, and there was every appearance of a storm, we put up for the night here, under the eaves of an Indian hut. Our poor beasts had to go without food. It rained heavily all night. About 8 A.M. it cleared off very fine, and we thought it advisable to push forward, although we were passing the last house on the road. We now entered the monotonous *paramo*, where a considerable number of cattle were grazing. Chimborazo, cloud-capped, the snow descending very

low, rose immediately in front, and apparently close to us. About 1 P.M. I pushed forward ahead of my cargoes, with the view of seeking some convenient spot to locate in. Soon after came on a hail-storm, of which we had a succession that afternoon. The wind made it extremely cold, and, my horse being knocked up, I was glad to get off and walk. Just at the point where the roads from Quito and Riobamba converge, was pointed out what was supposed to have been an aqueduct of the Incas. Below us was a very deep and wide *quebrada*, amongst the white rocks of which the Condors (*Sarcorhamphus*) are said to breed. We saw a few of these birds soaring above us, and two, which were not at any great height, appeared to be of a smaller species than that which I am acquainted with. Having arrived at a place called Panza, we halted: it hailed and rained in torrents. The mist was driving about so thick, that it was with great difficulty I found a spot for the night amidst some stunted trees. Fortunately, about 5 P.M. it cleared off again, and we had a fine, but cold night. It froze hard, the hail lay on the ground, and icicles hung from the trees. We busied ourselves with cutting branches, and gathering *paja* (a coarse grass with which the *paramo* is covered) to build a hut. We were here situated just on the 'divide.' The mountain-torrent below was flowing towards Guayaquil; all the other streams we had passed were running eastward. We were 7 leagues (about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles each) from Riobamba, and 8 or 9 from Guaranda, on the road to Guayaquil. The height is guessed at 14,000 feet, as I had no means for determination. We were within one league of the snow. We appeared to be above the range of the Gallinazos (*Cathartes*). Their place was taken by the Buïtres or Condors, one of which might be occasionally seen soaring above. Having procured specimens of the desired Humming-bird, I returned to Riobamba, with my eyes blood-shot, face blistered, and nose swollen, the usual effects of the wind at this altitude."

Owing to the blockade of Guayaquil by the Peruvians, Mr. Fraser has been unable to forward his latest collections.

Mr. Wallace's last letters to Mr. Stevens are dated "Batchian

October 29th, 1858.” This island, which lies westward of the southern extremity of Gilolo, has not hitherto been much visited by naturalists. Mr. Wallace has made a great discovery here, which we hope may recompense him for his disappointments at Havre-Dorey. Who would have thought of a Paradise-bird, and moreover of a new form, being found so far away from the mainland of Papua? Yet such is the fact; a communication on this subject was made to the last Meeting of the Zoological Society*, and Mr. G. R. Gray has proposed to confer the title of *Paradisea* (*Semioptera*) *wallacii* on the new species. Mr. Wallace has lately forwarded a few bird-skins from Amboyna, among which are *Lorius ruber*, the true *Geoffroi* *personatus*, and *Halcyon lazuli* (Temm.). The collection made at Havre-Dorey has also just arrived, and contains some of the most splendid birds imaginable, all in the finest condition. Among the Parrots are a new *Charmosyna*, *Eos fuscata*, *Eclectus cardinalis*, *Lorius tricolor*, *Geoffroi* *pucherani* ♂ et ♀, *Cyclopsitta desmaresti*, and *Microglossa aterrima*. There are many rare types, and several new species, of which we are glad to say Mr. G. R. Gray has undertaken the task of description. From Havre-Dorey comes *Goura coronata*, while, according to Mr. Wallace’s information, *Goura victoriae* is from the island of Jobie†. Mr. Wallace’s private

* “Zoological Society, Tuesday, March 22nd.—Mr. S. Stevens read an extract from a letter received by him from Mr. A. R. Wallace, dated ‘Batchian, Moluccas, Oct. 29, 1858,’ in which Mr. Wallace stated that he had the finest and most wonderful bird in the islands—a new Bird of Paradise, of a new genus, quite unlike anything yet known. Mr. Wallace enclosed a rough sketch of the bird. Mr. G. R. Gray having had the above sketch placed in his hands for examination and comparison with the other known species of *Paradisea*, agreed with Mr. Wallace that it is an entirely new form, differing from all its congeners, approaching most nearly to the King Bird of Paradise; but, in place of the lengthened caudal appendages, it has springing from the lesser covert of each wing two long shafts, each being webbed with white on each side at the apex. The possession of these peculiar winged standards induced Mr. G. R. Gray to propose the subgeneric name *Semioptera*; and he further added the provisional specific name of *wallacii*, in commemoration of the indefatigable energy Mr. Wallace had hitherto shown in the advancement of ornithological knowledge.”—(*Literary Gazette*, March 26th.)

† See Mr. Wallace’s letter in the ‘Zoologist’ for March last.

collection, which Mr. Stevens has kindly allowed us to inspect, contains specimens of *Lorius superbus*, Fraser (P.Z.S. 1845, p. 16), from the islands of Mysor or Jobie; and *Eos cyanogenia*, Bp., from the Mafors Islands; thus giving precise habitats to these two little-known species. The more information we obtain about the birds of these and similar island-groups, the more examples we find of the occupancy of distinct geographic areas by representative species—one of the fundamental truths of the still imperfectly developed theory of the distribution of animal life upon the surface of our globe.

A communication from Mr. Blyth, dated Calcutta, February 8, 1859, informs us that one of the remarkable Pheasants (*Diardigallus fasciolatus*), mentioned above, was then still living in a private menagerie in Calcutta, and “in first-rate plumage—the tail very remarkable—a most gracile, elegant, and game-looking bird.”

Mr. Blyth also mentions the arrival of some more birds from the Andaman Islands—*Hæmatornis cheela*, *Irena puella* (the Indian race), *Pericrocotus peregrinus*, and an *Oriolus*, probably of a new species. It is much smaller than *O. macrourus* of the Nicobars, with a very narrow nape-mark, only half as broad as in the Burmese *O. tenuirostris*, one-third as broad as in *O. indicus* and *O. macrourus*, and one-fourth as broad as in *O. chinensis*. A new typical *Sturnopastor*, also said to be from these islands, he proposes to call *S. niger*. It is “one-third smaller than *S. contra*, and all black, except a small whitish-grey patch on the centre of the belly, some white lunules on the rump, and some brightish yellow under the wing and orange naked skin round the eye.” Mr. Blyth goes on to say, “The Burmese Kestrel is a very distinct new species, *Tinnunculus atratus*, nobis. I have long had one, but hesitated to describe it on one specimen only. I still want the adult male.”

Prof. Baird, of Washington, is intending to reissue his General Report on N. American Birds, as a separate publication,

in one volume 4to (1064 pp.), and with seventy-five plates of hitherto unfigured species. We understand that the first volume of Dr. Brewer's work on N. American Oology will also be ready very shortly. Mr. J. W. Audubon also announces the republication, by subscription, of his father's celebrated and gigantic work on the Birds of North America. It will be issued in forty-four Numbers, of ten plates each, at ten dollars per Number, so that the cost of the new work will only amount to half of that of the original. A copy of the first part may be seen at Messrs. Trübner's.

At Stevens's Auction-rooms, on April 2nd, a skin of the new Cassowary (*Casuaris bennettii*) was sold for £10 to a London dealer. This bird, which was shipped from Sydney for England in good health, was accidentally killed during the voyage. It has since, we are happy to say, passed into the collection of the British Museum. The arrival of a fresh pair of these same birds, which were sent off from Sydney in February last as a present to the Zoological Society by Dr. Bennett, may shortly be expected.

A sale of eggs obtained by Mr. Wolley's collectors in Lapland, chiefly in the year 1858, took place at the same Auction-rooms on March 8th. The three eggs that fetched the highest prices were those of the Smew (*Mergus albellus*)—out of the nest spoken of in Number I. of 'The Ibis'—£5 5s.; the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa rufa*), £4 8s.; and the Buffon's Skua (*Lestris parasiticus*), £4. Of the latter egg, Mr. Wolley remarks, in a letter,—“This is a very difficult egg to get, because it seems doubtful whether the bird breeds at all upon the coast, though Richardson's Skua does so in plenty, all round the North Cape, and down the Russian coast.” The eggs of the Waxwing (*Ampelis garrula*), of which there were nine in the sale, averaged about £3 each. The Pine-Grosbeaks' (*Strobilophaga enucleator*) sold for £2 2s. There were likewise in the catalogue eggs of the Spotted Redshank (*Totanus fuscus*), Lapp Owl (*Strix lapponica*), Siberian Jay (*Perisoreus infaustus*), Siberian Tit (*Parus sibiricus*), and the *Anser finmarchicus* of Gunner—all first discovered by Mr. Wolley.